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Sanctions Against Cuba

The sanctions voted against Castro Cuba represent the strongest action so far by the Organization of American States, but their strength lies in imponderables.

For example, the sanction by the American republics against trade with Cuba (excepting food and medicines) is not likely to have any great effect. Chile, Uruguay and Mexico are the only republics trading with Cuba, and their trade of \$15,200,000 is largely in food-stuffs.

The outright warning to Fidel Castro that further efforts at intervention and subversion would allow the republics, individually or collectively, to use armed force in self-defense is not the "hunting license" against Cuba that some diplomats predict it will be. Any of the republics could use armed force now if threatened with Castro aggression. Venezuela naturally fought back against Castro subversion though it did not choose to go to war with Cuba.

A good deal depends on how Castro himself accepts this warning. If he decides to halt his export of revolution, the result may be a new approach to Cuba by the OAS. It reserves the right to discontinue the sanctions. But Castro's first reaction is defiant and we doubt that any republic expects him to become more peaceable very quickly.

What seems more likely is a weakening of the popular basis for Castro-inspired subversion. The Cuban dictator has been branded collectively as an aggressor and an interventionist. He no longer seems the liberator or the emancipator to Latin Americans, except perhaps to his devoted Marxist following. His loss of face and popularity has been gradual, owing more to his own actions than to those of the OAS, but sanctions signed on the eleventh anniversary of his 26th of July Movement reduce the cause for celebration in Havana.

Since Castro may prove to be his own worst enemy, when it comes to exporting revolution, the United States was wise not to force upon the OAS its proposal for collective air, land and sea surveillance of Cuba. As Secretary of State Rusk said, such surveillance goes on anyway; it would have been a mistake for the United States to try to dictate harsher terms than the Latin states were willing to accept.

Mexico's position, along with that of Chile, remains puzzling. For Mexico, Vincente Sanchez Gavito said that Cuban activities against Venezuela did not demonstrate a violation of the latter's territorial integrity or political independence. It is true that Castro did not invade Venezuela, but his forces there certainly threatened the independence of the government and of the people who elected it.

Castro subversion represents a different kind of intervention than the use of troops by traditional colonialism, but it is outright intervention nonetheless. It is aimed at every republic. The realistic answer to it is by collective action of the republics. That is the answer of the sanctions.